THE ART EXHIBITION CATALOGUES OF THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

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Victoria & Albert Museum (circulating)

1969

John Ernest
Anthony Hill
Malcolm Hughes
Gillian Wise

FOUR ARTISTS

Reliefs, Constructions and Drawings.

A Victoria and Albert Museum Loan Exhibition.

1969

Introduction

This is one of a series of loan exhibitions arranged by the Victoria and Albert Museum's Circulation Department, and consisting of recent, medium-scale works by perhaps four or five contemporary artists. The associative link implicit in these invitations has not necessarily been either narrow or specific. But the artists generally may be seen to share certain common concerns, which it is hoped that the exhibitions may illuminate.

Each of the four present artists makes relief constructions but they do, also, have other mutual affinities.

John Ernest and Anthony Hill have in the past worked in a more closely parallel manner than is to be seen in their current directions – both reaching the constructivist point of view in the mid-1950's, and continuing their later development without again altering this fundamental position.

Gillian Wise, interested in industrial materials and industrial methods of assembly, is a younger member of the English constructivist movement, already possessing an assured and mature style of her own. All three produce work which is pictorial, certainly in terms of form, yet which possesses a distinct nature equidistant from painting as it is from sculpture.

Malcolm Hughes, on the other hand, remains primarily a painter, who, from experimenting with areas of onlaid metal and becoming preoccupied with sequential changes of level, has begun relatively recently to use the relief format.

All four, however, are interested in, and indeed rely upon, mathematical ideas, both for their own sake and for their analogy as a language.

One direct starting-point for this series of exhibitions has been that the Museum continuously and actively acquires examples of modern graphic work for its permanent collections, reflecting various aspects of today's preoccupations. The bulk of the present drawings have in fact been acquired by the Museum for this purpose. Most of the reliefs themselves, on the other hand – for which in many cases the drawings form connected studies – have been kindly lent by the artists themselves or by their exhibiting galleries. These loans, for which the Museum is greatly indebted, have been detailed in this handlist, all other items being now part of the Museum's collection.

John Ernest

Biography

1922 Born Philadelphia, U.S.A. Studied New York and Philadelphia.
1949 Lived and worked in Sweden and Paris.
1951 Moved to London. Work fluctuated between figurative and abstract painting.
1952–6 Studied at St Martins School of Art.
1956 Made constructions exclusively.
1960–5 Visiting lecturer Bath Academy of Art, Corsham. Lecturer now at Chelsea School of Art.

I like to make things in which the elements are distinct and in which each decision is sure and unambiguous. My elements are squares, triangles, lines and other simple shapes. Their properties of colour and various surface qualities, together with such things as levels of relief the distance between things, etc., constitute my palette. Mostly I work by combining these elements – either physically or in my mind. I arrange and re-arrange my basic stuff until I have assembled an order that either pleases me or satisfies the pre-conditions of the work.

Two principle interests underlie my work. One is the physical medium of the relief itself and the other is my interest in mathematical structures. They may be fundamentally different, but they are not incompatible. It seems to me that the discreteness, the separability of the parts of the relief provide a physical counterpart to the set of elements of a mathematical system.

However, the two interests are rarely balanced in a single work. The reliefs that I have in this exhibition show a bias towards the exploitation of physical properties, (the exception is 'linear relief 1' which attempts to be witty about bi-lateral reflection). The drawings are more rigorously structured and were originally devised as visual analogues to particular group tables.

Catalogue

1 Triangulated relief 1. 1965.
Wood, formica and P.V.C. 21" x 27½" x 5½".
2 Strip relief. 1962.
Formica, stainless steel and wood. 32" x 23" x 1¾".
3 Linear relief 1. 1964.
Cellulose, hardboard, aluminium and formica.
48" x 30" x 2¾".
4 Maquette for I.U.A. relief mural. 1961.
Card and gouache. 66¾" x 27¼" x 4¾".
5–8 Drawings. 1968.

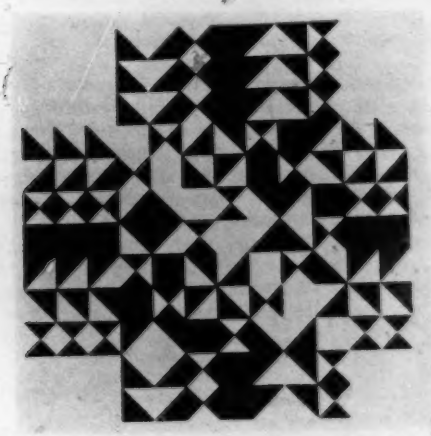
John Ernest

One Man Exhibitions

1964 I.C.A. Gallery, London.
Queens University, Belfast.

Group Exhibitions

1954 'Artist vs machine'. Building Centre, London.
1956 'This is tomorrow'. Whitechapel Gallery, London.
1957 'Abstract'. A.I.A. Gallery, London.
'Dimensions'. O'Hana Gallery, London.
1958 'Pictures without Paint'. A.I.A. Gallery, London.
1961 'Construction England'. Drian Gallery, London.
'British Constructivist Art'. U.S.A.
1962 'Experiment in Construction'. Amsterdam and Zurich.
'Painters Carpet'. I.C.A. Gallery, London.
'Kompas 2'. Eindhoven.
1963 John Moores Exhibition, Liverpool.
1964 'Painting/Sculpture of a Decade'. Tate Gallery, London.
1965 'British Sculpture 60's'. Tate Gallery, London.
'Corsham Painters and Sculptors'. Arts Council.
'Industry and the Artist'. Liverpool.
1966 Axiom Gallery, London.
Amolfini Gallery, Bristol.
'Constructions'. Axiom Gallery London.
1967 'Unit/Series/Progressions'. Arts Council.
Open 100. Edinburgh.
1968 Documenta 4. Kassel.
'Relief/Construction/Relief'. Chicago.



Collections

Tate Gallery. Victoria and Albert Museum. Arts Council.
Private Collections.

Anthony Hill

Biography

1930 Born London. Studied at St. Martins and Central Schools of Art.
1950–4 Abstract paintings, collage and projects for serial production.
1955 Exhibited first constructional relief at Redfern Gallery.
1961 Made constructional screen I.U.A. Headquarters Building.
1968 Consultant designer, with Gillian Wise, wall screen for observation lounge, Cunard Queen Elizabeth II.

Also known as a theoretical writer.
Structure Magazine. 1959–62
The Structural Syndrome. Vol. 4, Vision and Value Ed. G. Kepes. Braziller. 1966
Art and Mathesis. Leonardo Vol. 1. No.3.
Editor and contributor DATA, Faber. 1968.

Abstract painting and sculpture opened up a new freedom, and as a logical consequence it became possible to make abstract works that were neither painting nor sculpture.

The constructed relief was one of the first of many such developments.

Freed from the spatial ambiguities present in painting, the relief is also less of an object than is sculpture.

As a result, illusion is annihilated and so is the association with everyday objects – fetishism of one kind or another.

Catalogue

9 Low relief. 1955–66.
Perspex. 24" x 35½" x 1¾".
10 Relief construction. 1955–66.
Perspex, aluminium. 24" x 24" x 2½".
11 Relief construction. 1962.
Perspex, aluminium. 24" x 21" x 5¾"
12 Relief construction. 1963.
Perspex, aluminium. 30½" x 24" x 5".
13 Maquette. 1962–63.
Perspex, aluminium. 16¾" x 17" x 3¾".
14 Maquette. 1965–66.
Perspex, aluminium. 24" x 24" x 2¾".
15 Maquettes for a low relief. 1955–60
Card. a. 5¼" x 10¾". b. 5¼" x 11".
16 Line print-permutation suite. 1966.
Acetate. 22" x 22".

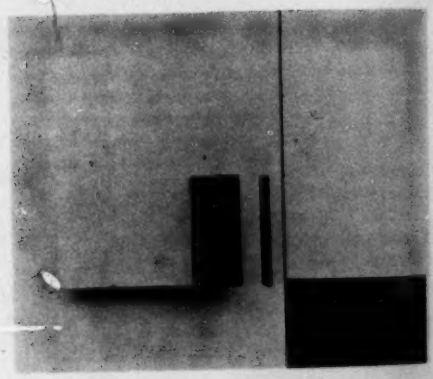
Anthony Hill

One Man Exhibitions

1958 I.C.A. Gallery, London.
1963 I.C.A. Gallery, London.
1966 Kasmin Gallery, London.
1969 Kasmin Gallery, London.

Group Exhibitions

1956 'This is tomorrow'. Whitechapel Gallery, London.
1957 'Statements'. I.C.A. Gallery, London.
'Dimensions'. O'Hana Gallery, London.
1960 'Konkrete Kunst'. Zurich.
1961 'Construction England'. Drian Gallery, London.
2nd Paris Biennale.
1962 'British Constructivist Art'. U.S.A.
'Experiment in Construction'. Amsterdam and Zurich.
'Constructivisme'. Leverkusen.
1963 'Construction England'. Arts Council.
4th Biennale San Marino.
1964 'Painting/Sculpture of a Decade'. Tate Gallery, London.
'Contemporary British Painting'. Buffalo, U.S.A.
1965 'British Sculpture 60's'. Tate Gallery, London.
8th Tokyo Biennale.
'Art and Movement'. Tel Aviv.
1967 'Recent British Painting'. Tate Gallery, London.
1968 'Plus x Minus'. Buffalo, U.S.A.
Documenta 4. Kassel.
'Relief/Construction/Relief'. Chicago.
1969 1st Nuremberg Biennale.



Collections

Arts Council. Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
British Council. Tate Gallery. R.C.A. Victor, U.S.A.
Victoria and Albert Museum. Stuyvesant Foundation.
Whitworth Museum, Manchester. Gulbenkian Foundation.
Rijksmuseum Kroller-Muller, Oterloo.

Malcolm Hughes

Biography

1920 Born Manchester. Studied at Regional College of Art, Manchester and Royal College of Art.
1966 Received Arts Council Award. Lives and works in London and Bath.
Visiting lecturer at Bath Academy of Art, Corsham, and Chelsea School of Art.

The present 'work in progress' emerged out of one particular aspect of my immediate past work and my interest in relatively simple thematic material. That is to say, I have been concerned to investigate and develop certain ideas relating to sequence, rhythm, extension and repetition.

The conceptual means employed, again basically simple, tend to be those of extraction and reduction from a given sequence of numbers. Sometimes these are taken in one direction only; at others, alternating direction and superimposition are used.

At the visual, mainly drawing level, a limited tonal progression is used to develop further these number sequences. The possibility of a two dimensional chromatic development, although not evident in the work here exhibited, is implied.

Another extension of the means, at the perceptual level, takes place when the area of decision-making enters that of the concrete/physical. Real light and limited physical space now become the principal agents that one is working with, and the particular demands and characteristics of the constructional relief become manifest.
December, 1968.

Catalogue

17 Square relief. White. 1968.
Plywood, hardboard and P.V.A. 29½" x 29½" x 4".
18 Horizontal rectangular relief. White. 1968.
Plywood, hardboard and P.V.A. 50½" x 28" x 4".
19 Vertical rectangular relief. White. 1968.
Plywood, hardboard and P.V.A. 21" x 33" x 4".
20 Drawing for vertical rectangular relief. 1968.
19¾" x 28¾".
21 Maquette. 1968.
Card and hardboard. 15¾" x 16½" x 1".
22–26 Drawings. 1968.

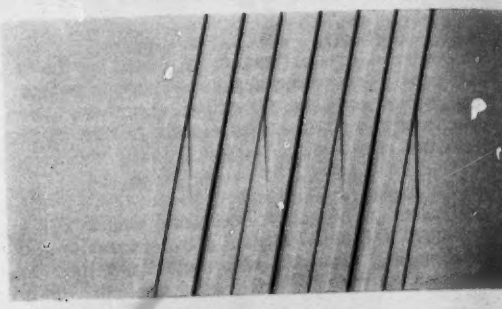
Malcolm Hughes

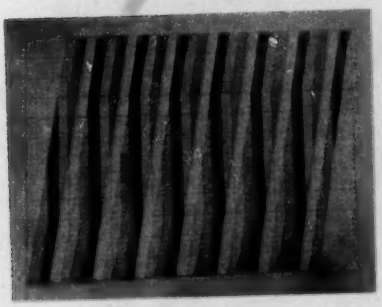
One Man Exhibitions

1965 I.C.A. Gallery, London.
1967 Axiom Gallery, London.

Group Exhibitions.

1962 A.I.A. Gallery, London.
1964 'Painting towards Environment', Arts Council.
'Formal Visual Dialogue'. Univ. of Wales, Aberyst.
1965 'Trends'. Manchester City Art Gallery.
1966 Axiom Gallery, London.
Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh.
1967 'Post Formal Painting'. Midland Group, Nottingham.
'Salon des Realities Nouvelles'. Paris.
John Moores Exhibition, Liverpool. Prize Winner.





Collections.

Tate Gallery. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.
Arts Council. Bristol City Art Gallery.
Victoria and Albert Museum. University of Sussex.
Min. of Works. (Mural, VIP lounge Gatwick Airport)
Magdalen College, Cambridge. Private Collections.

Gillian Wise

Biography

1936 Born London. Studied at Wimbledon School of Art.
Became interested in the Constructivist Movement.
Lives and works in London using industrial material and techniques of assembly.
1961 Made constructional screen, I.U.A.
1968 Consultant designer with Anthony Hill, wall screen for observation lounge, Cunard Queen Elizabeth II.
Three months UNESCO Fellowship to Prague.

The only statement I want to make about these works is to emphasise the different functions of the three dimensional objects and the drawings. The drawings explain the linearpath/circuit structures that I often use in the works, but when they become embedded in physical objects these linear ideas take on a different character. Faced with the stimuli and distraction of reflections, texture, weight, space and colour, plus their technique of assembly, our reactions are much more sporadic and variable than in the fantasy space of drawing. What interests me as an artist is to understand this dialogue between physical information and mental concept and to extend our knowledge of it.

The expansion of technical resources that has already become available to us, quite apart from things envisaged, will bring with it the need to think on a pan-technical level. That is, the artist will know less about more things, he cannot 'feel' his way over a lifetime of specialisation, as the oil-painter could, for example. Therefere, it becomes more important to make a conscious study of how to assess technical means. To learn as much about how we can think as to express what we do think.

Catalogue

27 Directed points. Construction. 1967.
Rubber, traffolyte, perspex and aluminium.
18" x 18" x 1¾".
28 Two adjacent squares. Construction. 1966.
Steel, perspex, aluminium and darvic. 20" x 30" x 3½".
29 Unicursal curve in three colours. No.2. 1967.
Anodised aluminium, darvic base, 21" x 21" x 1".
30 Relief constructed from unicursal curve No.2. 1967.
Aluminium, cobex and perspex on dural. 32" x 32" x 1½".
31-36 Drawings. 1967–68.

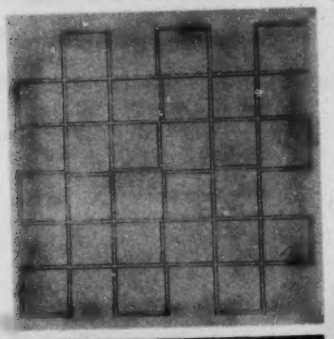
Gillian Wise

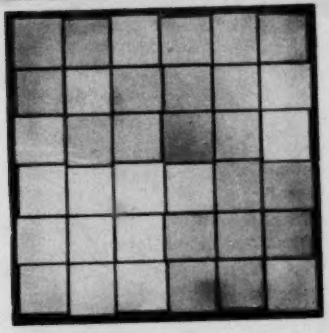
One Man Exhibitions.

1963 I.C.A. Gallery, London.
1967 Axiom Gallery, London.

Group Exhibitions.

1957 'Young Contemporaries'.
1958 A.I.A. Gallery, London.
1961 'Construction England'. Drian Gallery, London.
1962 'Constructivisme', Paris.
1963 'Construction England', Arts Council.
1965 8th Tokyo Biennale.
'British Sculpture 60's'. Tate Gallery, London.
1967 'Unit/Series/Progression', Arts Council.
1968 'Concretists Club'. Prague.
'Relief/Construction/Relief', Chicago.
1969 1st Nuremberg Biennale.
'Artists Projects', Berne.
100 toys. Welsh Arts Council.





Collections.

Tate Gallery. Victoria and Albert Museum.
Arts Council. Contemporary Arts Society.
British Council. Private Collections.

LIBRARY

Loans in the Exhibition.

Artist's Loans.
Exhibit Nos. 3, 4, 11, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 36.

Kasmin Gallery.
Exhibit No. 10.

Axiom Gallery.
Exhibit No. 2.